

The Utah 3R's Project Rights, Responsibility and Respect

Beginning in 1997, the Utah State Office of Education began cooperation in a new initiative to teach civic virtue and mutual understanding in the public schools of Utah. Known as the Utah Three R's Project (Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect), this project has been funded by a major grant from the George S. and Delores Doré Eccles Foundation. Resources for the project will also be provided by the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University.

The Utah Three R's Project is built on the conviction that the rights and responsibilities that flow from the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provide a civic framework within which the citizens of Utah are able to debate differences. Today many American communities are divided over educational philosophy, school reform, and the role of religion and values in our public schools. Conflict and debate are vital to democracy. Yet, if controversies about public education are to advance the best interest of the nation, then how we debate, and not only what we debate, is critical.

Our nation urgently needs a reaffirmation of our shared commitment, as American citizens, to the guiding principles of the Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution. The rights and responsibilities of the Religious Liberty clauses provide the civic framework within which we are able to debate our differences, to understand one another, and to forge public policies that serve the common good.

How can we use this civic framework to resolve conflicts in public education, and how can we pass it on to our children?

Using the First Amendment principles of rights, responsibilities, and respect, the Utah Three R's Project will enable Utahns to agree on policies and practices that protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths and none. Teachers will be prepared to teach our children and grandchildren about religions and cultures in ways that are educationally sound and constitutionally permissible.

For more information about the Utah 3Rs Project, please contact:

**Martha Ball, Director
Utah 3Rs Project
Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P. O. Box 144200
Instructional Materials, 26A
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200
801-538-7503**